

Siberia
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Conjectures on crisis management during the Watergate sensations

In my view, Kissinger is the only one now or ever in the Nixon administration who could have carried off his press conference today as he did. If it does not ease the pressure on Nixon, it will ease Nixon's feeling of pressure.

(I had an early indication, a White House helicopter roughly an hour after the radio carried the news of the USSR's acceptance of the US resolution. I phoned the Post to say that it seemed like something was going to be up at Camp David because while GL was not flying there, he travelling only when there are two machines, somebody was going there. Not until 8 p.m. did I hear that he was there for the night.)

The wrong question was the nasty addressed to Superkraut. The question was not was the alert legitimate, for it could well have been or it could have been contrived with no available proof either way. The question should have been was the situation not necessarily contrived but allowed to develop to the point where it was or seemed to be an authentic crisis/

Kissinger's account of warning to the US is not really in accord with Israel's, whose version of the time I see no reason to question. The Israeli version more than K's suggests that the US did less than it could have to persuade the Arabs not to start another war. If the US had merely said it had reason to believe the Arabs were about to start a war, or had leaked this, if ~~it~~ it had then started, all that followed would have been different.

War is the traditional avoidance of domestic problems.

The USSR had its own set of serious problems not addressed in any US consideration I've read~~ed~~ or seen or heard. Its mendicants were wasting its treasure as though it was the only true way to Mecca. And were getting roundly beaten with the considerable advantages of initial treachery. If the war didn't stop, major Egyptian cities would have fallen, after which it would have been no trick for Damascus to be taken. This against the tremendous differences in both population and the means of war, this by a nation of a mere 3,000,000 so many of whom are old and otherwise unfit for fighting?

So, for these and other reasons, the USSR had the ~~need~~ need to cool it. It had obtained the major anti-US objective, the oil blockade. With the need, and with the possibilities of benefit from the appreciation of GL, it had only to do and say nothing if it had not started a uni-lateral intervention. When all that was alleged is by sea and by transports, I fail to see how intelligence can distinguish between its recent normal resupply and an armed force for intervention.

There is that which bears on whether there was a deal. Kissinger finished a few minutes after 1 p.m. A few minutes after the 2 p.m. CBS net radio news or on it there was the report of USSR acceptance of the US resolution at the UN. That was too fast for relaying the K remarks to Moscow, having a decision reached there and relayed to the USSR delegation in NYC. Or, the USSR had decided before SuperK's superdooper that its interest lay in supporting the US resolution.

When SuperK was recently in Moscow and negotiated a simple agreement on a resolution with built-in self-destruct, ~~which~~ neither he nor the USSR was without doubt that it could not even hold at the outset. If they did not then have some basic agreement on what to do with a deal they designed not to be workable when it didn't work, both sides were insane.

It may be premature to suggest that once the USSR got the initial benefit from this war it would be in a position to liquidate its liabilities in the Arab war, but that is not impossible. The international need have changed much since Israel could be considered a US bastion on the edge of the USSR's hearland. Today it is hardly of symbolic importance unless the US or USSR wants to make it important. Nor do the Arabs seem to have a built-in importance to the USSR. Only as an anti-US force. If it ~~loses~~ loses that need, what need does the USSR have for a great economic, political and diplomatic liability? Especially when it is worried about China.

Anyway, chalk one up for SuperNixon. HW 10/25/73